**Scheduling online learning**

Scheduling online learning provides structure and focus for both students and staff. It acts as a ‘placeholder’ that tells students when they are expected to engage in activies. This will help them to organise aspects of their domestic, work and social lives around their learning. Scheduling also eliminates the risk of clashes with face-to-face teaching or other modules’ online activity.

Online teaching can free programmes from restrictions associated with the need for physical space. It offers programme teams the opportunity to reconceptualise module delivery. Different delivery patterns can be accommodated and should be explored before firm scheduling decisions are made. However, scheduling modules should be managed in the context of the whole programme to ensure consistency and coherency,

Scheduled online learning should align with the module’s contact hours (as published on the validated proforma). The Active Blended Learning approach signals a change in how these hours are viewed. They no longer relate to the specific delivery categories (e.g. lecture, workshop) indicated on the proforma. Instead, contact hours indicate how long the each student should spend undertaking structured learning activities. These can be face-to-face or online. Online structured learning activities are characterised by explicit instruction that guides students through each learning opportunity. It should also provide a clear indication of how long each activity should take. Contact hours exclude independent study, guided reading or similar activities that would sit outside a scheduled session.

Online learning can be either **synchronous** (in real time) or **asynchronous** (made available at a set point, but open to completion at another time).

* **Synchronous** learning activities include live seminars, video-conferencing, chat, open office hours, tutorials.
* **Asynchronous** learning activities include pre-recorded lectures, social discussion board activity, quizzes, reflective tasks, online group work.

There is no assumption that scheduled hours will only include synchronous activities. Instead, it is envisaged that a typical online session will include a range of different tasks, with some emphasis on interaction and engagement. To support students’ time management, asynchronous tasks should be available for the learner at the scheduled time.

Scheduling should bear the following in mind:

1. Scheduling of online learning follows the creation of the face-to-face timetable.
2. Scheduled online learning activities are considered as contact hours within an Active Blended Learning context.
3. Module contact hours for online activity will take account of face-to-face teaching. The combination of scheduled online learning activity and face-to-face teaching should mirror the total contact hours. However, management of hours at modular level will be determined by how the programme team/School decide to use their face-to-face teaching resource in a way that works best for individual disciplines and programmes.
4. Asynchronous learning activities should have clear deadlines to provide additional structure for students, allowing them to manage their own learning.
5. Programme teams should consider the amount, range and type of online learning activities to avoid repetition and overload.
6. Relevant teaching staff should be available during scheduled hours to offer a regular point of contact for students.